

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 04052 081800Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----081802Z 118541 /44
O 081730Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7061
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4052

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PLOS ENRG LY TS US
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE: CURRENT
TUNISIAN POSITION

REF: STATE 131065, TO VE 131615, TRIPOLI 0751

1. I MANAGED TO SEE FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY AT 1715
HOURS TODAY DURING RECESS OF ALL-DAY TALKS ON CONTINENTAL
SHELF DISPUTE CHAIRED BY ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL
RIADH AND ATTENDED BY LIBYAN FONMIN TURAYKI.

2. I READ PERTINENT PARTS OF REF STATE TELS TO CHATTY
TO INDICATE DEPARTMENT'S PERPLEXITY CONCERNING CURRENT
GOT POSITION ON WITHDRAWAL OF "J.W. BATES". I ALSO
READ TO HIM REF TRIPOLI TEL OF TODAY'S DATE WHICH I SAID
WOULD ONLY ADD TO WASHINGTON'S CONFUSION. HE KNEW I HAD
SEEN MEJDOUN YESTERDAY AND SAID I HAD BEEN GIVEN CORRECT
INFORMATION BY HIM CONCERNING THE TUNISIAN POSITION.

3. CHATTY THEN DIGRESSED TO SAY THAT HE WAS VERY
PLEASED WITH THE WAY TODAY'S MEETINGS ARE GOING. HE STATED
THAT THEY HAD ALREADY ACHIEVED ALMOST COMPLETE AGREEMENT
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 04052 081800Z

ON THE TEXT OF A "COMPROMIS" FOR SUBMISSION OF THE
DISPUTE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ). IN THIS
TEXT ONLY ONE POINT REMAINED TO BE WORKED OUT TO TUNISIA'S
SATISFACTION: WHILE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED BETWEEN
THE TWO PARTIES THAT NO EXPLOITATION RPT EXPLOITATION WOULD
PROCEED DURING ARBITRATION PROCESS, GOT HAD NOT YET WON
ITS POINT THAT THERE SHOULD ALSO BE NO EXPLORATION RPT

EXPLORATION DURING ARBITRATION. HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT IN RESUMED SESSION WITH RIYADH AND TURAYKI THIS EVENING THIS POINT COULD ALSO BE AGREED UPON. IF LIBYA REFUSES TO ACCEPT "NON-EXPLORATION" PRINCIPLE GOT WILL REJECT REMAINDER OF DRAFT AND RETURN TO ITS POSITION THAT "J.W. BATES" MUST WITHDRAW FROM DISPUTED AREA.

4. CHATTY ASKED ME WHETHER I KNEW HOW LONG "J. W. BATES" INTENDED TO DRILL. I SAID I HAD NO IDEA BUT HAD HEARD ESTIMATES RANGING FROM TWO WEEKS TO SIX WEEKS. CHATTY SAID THAT HIS INFORMATION WAS "15 DAYS". HE INDICATED THAT TUNISIA COULD BE PATIENT FOR A TOTAL OF 15 DAYS STARTING FROM BEGINNING OF DRILLING OPERATIONS, BUT ONLY IF LIBYA CONCEDES ON POINT OF NO FURTHER EXPLORATION.

5. I NEXT ASKED CHATTY FOR A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO CURRENT PROMISING OUTCOME. FONMIN SAID THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA CONSIDERED THAT AFTER QADHAFI IN JUNE 2 SPEECH (TEXT OF WHICH STILL NOT AVAILABLE TO US) AGREED TO PRINCIPLE OF ARBITRATION, TUNISIA DECIDED TO DROP ITS PRE-CONDITION THAT IT WOULD HOLD NO TALKS WITH TURAYKI WHILE "J. W. BATES" REMAINED ON SITE. THUS, SAID CHATTY, "J.W. BATES" CAN REMAIN ON SITE PENDING RESOLUTION OF "NON-EXPLORATION" ISSUE. GOT WILL CONTINUE TO WANT USG TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON READING AND BATES TO WITHDRAW AND CHATTY PROMISED TO DISCUSS THIS WITH ME AS SOON AS OUTCOME OF TUNIS MEETINGS IS KNOWN.

6. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT GOT FOUND IT USEFUL FOR
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PAGE 03 TUNIS 04052 081800Z

USG TO BE MAINTAINING PRESSURE ON READING AND BATES PRIOR TO AND DURING LONDON MEETINGS WITH LIBYAN NOC. I SUGGEST BEST COURSE FOR DEPT TO FOLLOW AT PRESENT IS TO ADVISE READING AND BATES PRESIDENT THORNTON TO REMAIN IN LONDON PENDING OUTCOME OF PRESENT TUNIS TALKS.
MULCAHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONTINENTAL SHELF, DISPUTES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TUNIS04052
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770204-0635
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770676/aaaacomy.tel
Line Count: 103
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9c411782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 131065, 77 TRIPOLI 751
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2221256
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE: CURRENT TUNISIAN POSITION
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, ENRG, LY, TS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9c411782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009